Doing the Feminist Work in AI: Reflections from an AI Project in Latin America

Marianela Ciolfi Felice
KTH Royal Institute of Technology
Stockholm, Sweden
ciolfi@kth.se

Ivana Feldfeber
DataGénero - Observatorio de Datos con Perspectiva de Género
Buenos Aires, Argentina
ivanafeldfeber@gmail.com

Carolina Glasserman Apicella
Universidad Nacional de San Martín
Buenos Aires, Argentina
DataGénero - Observatorio de Datos con Perspectiva de Género
Buenos Aires, Argentina
caroglasserman@gmail.com

Yasmín Belén Quiroga
DataGénero - Observatorio de Datos con Perspectiva de Género
Buenos Aires, Argentina
yasquiroga@gmail.com

Julián Ansaldo
Collective AI
Buenos Aires, Argentina
julianansaldo@gmail.com

Luciano Lapenna
Universidad Tecnológica Nacional
Buenos Aires, Argentina
lucianoglapenna@gmail.com

Santiago Bezchinsky
Universidad de Buenos Aires
Buenos Aires, Argentina
santibezchinsky@gmail.com

Raul Barriga Rubio
Collective AI
Buenos Aires, Argentina
rbarriga@df.uba.ar

Mailén García
Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata
Mar del Plata, Argentina
DataGénero - Observatorio de Datos con Perspectiva de Género
Buenos Aires, Argentina
garciamailena@gmail.com

Abstract

The contemporary AI development landscape is dominated by big corporations, lacks diversity, and mostly centres the Global North, or applies extractivist logics in the South. This paper showcases a feminist process of AI development from Latin America, where we created an interactive, AI-powered tool that helps criminal court officers open justice data, addressing a data gap on gender-based violence. Through a collaborative autoethnography, drawing from Latin American feminisms, we unpack and visibilize the feminist work that was required, as a crucial step to counter hegemonic narratives. Foregrounding the subjugated knowledges of our experiences, we offer a concrete example of a feminist approach to AI development grounded in practice. With this, we aim to critically inspire those who consider building technology in service of social justice causes, or who choose to build AI systems otherwise.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → Human computer interaction (HCI); Empirical studies in HCI.

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Keywords

feminist AI, activism, NGO, critical computing, critical HCI, feminist research, duoethnography, Global South

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1 Introduction

Critical computing and social justice perspectives, including decolonial, anti-racist, anti-ableist, indigenous, and feminist approaches [9, 14, 21, 42, 49, 58, 92], are flourishing and taking space in HCI and adjacent fields, and growing their dedicated subcommittee at CHI [23]. At the same time, these perspectives are gaining traction within AI and data science research, mostly in venues such as FAccT and AIES (e.g., [64, 66]) –where scholars are increasingly recognising data work as a value-laden, situated practice in which a 'gaze from nowhere' [53] is not possible–, and through influential frameworks such as data feminism [32] and even the proposal of a new interdisciplinary field of human-centred data science [4]. Garcia et al. have recently pointed out that although the fields of HCI and critical data studies have examined the *"work practices required to design, create, and work with data"* [3:1], most of this scholarship is from the so-called Global North, and Septiandri et al.

[104], for example, have found that the FAccT community has so far based most of its analyses on participants from the USA.

Critical scholars have written compelling pieces about the harms that existing AI systems and the algorithmisation of life can produce and how such harms exacerbate gender- and race-based inequalities (e.g., [13, 17, 66, 90]). In the case of feminist perspectives, there is a growing body of work using feminist thinking as an analytical lens (e.g., [93]). In spite of these extremely valuable, inspiring precedents, there are still very few published examples of concrete AI *development* projects that take an explicitly critical or justice-oriented approach [63, 66], and thus fewer that explicitly employ feminist perspectives from the onset [109]. Here again, there is a scarcity of examples of critical AI development in contexts outside the Global North, such as Latin America, and in particular conducted by Latin Americans. Borrowing Taylor's terms [110], we believe that the intersection between the fields of critical HCI and AI needs research conducted "in there" rather than "out there" when it comes to Latin America, a region in the Global South that suffers from extractivism of natural resources and of data [95, 100, 102, 113] in a context of digital and data colonialism [26, 71, 84]. And, while perceived as under-studied by the Global North [3], Latin America has long generated knowledge and change from within, being the birthplace of strong critical and feminist movements and theories (e.g., [40, 76], and fourth-wave feminism *Ni Una Menos*), and counting with a long history of activism-led social change (as shown by, e.g., [3, 97]).

The authors of this paper are part of the ongoing *AymurAI* project, which was born out of Latin American feminist activism, motivated by the lack of structured data about justice in terms of gender-based violence. AymurAI is a transdisciplinary project that combines actors from activism, the judiciary, software development, and academic research. Despite employing AI techniques (in particular, natural-language processing –NLP– machine learning models) as one more tool to support people in their collective struggles for social justice, we hold a strong commitment to resist technosolutionism –an approach that poses technology as a self-contained solution to complex human problems [73], and which results in severely flawed interventions when applied in machine learning [103]. We are in line with the call of recent HCI research [99, 119] that argues for a more horizontal relationship between Latin America and the Global North, embracing a *pluriverse* approach rather than a dichotomy between mainstream and margin, avoiding to centre the deficits of the Global South, and refraining from seeing it as a monolithic entity. We also build upon feminist HCI [9], which calls to not just listen and engage but to centre voices previously marginalised by the Western universalism in HCI –such as the voices of women, non-researchers, non-professional designers, and of Global South populations. Similarly, we are inspired by Freire, who urged in the 1960s to consider the silenced voices and to understand their lived experiences. Feminist HCI, in addition, invites us to interrogate power and privilege in the creation of technology. We believe that to deepen this argument, critical HCI must learn also from practice in the bright pockets that are emerging as alternatives to the hegemonic AI technology landscape, i.e. not just from technological development in research environments, big tech corporations or well-resourced governments [63], but also from grassroots movements, NGOs, and cooperatives –and above all, putting critical perspectives in action. Through this paper, thus, we seek to make space for such Latin American voices as creators of technology and in particular of AI systems, rather than objects of study in projects conceived in the Global North. By doing so, we are responding to Garcia et al's call for centring real-world scenarios and exploring *"how knowledge from data activism can lead academic research" [3:2]* in HCI, and we are challenging the hegemonic knowledge production in AI development.

In this paper, we introduce the AymurAI project and the AI-powered tool we created, providing an account of the process –and centring our experiences of it– from a plurality of voices. To collectively build our narrative, we departed from asking ourselves what it meant and what characterised doing an AI project from Latin America using a feminist approach. We examined our process through a collaborative autoethnography (CAE) [20] where we combined reflections and interviews within the team. This method surfaced challenges, tensions, strategies, and joyful moments of feminist solidarity and resistance. Our report –informed by Latin American feminist thinking and movements– puts the focus on the *feminist work* that the project required in practice. Moreover, our focus on feminist work in AI development can be seen as another *"feminist tactic of examining what gets left out of prevalent narratives"* [59:2] and a direct way of 'making labour visible' [32]. In doing this, our work adds CAE to the methods toolbox for reflexivity in AI development. And, by using a Latin American lens to unpack our process, we broaden the diversity of literature that critical HCI research can draw from. We offer our insights to researchers and practitioners participating or wishing to participate in projects that build AI systems otherwise. In addition, we hope that our work can also foster dialogue in the activist world by using academia as an additional channel.

In a nutshell, we contribute our case to the flourishing critical HCI community, as an example of feminisms[1] in AI development –an example with which to think about how computing can be put at the service of social justice without posing technology as a solution.

1.1 Positionality

Co-authors were born, raised, and educated in Argentina (except one who was born in Chile), and all except the first author live and work there. Five of us are cisgender women and four are cisgender men. We currently work professionally, study, and/or volunteer in one or more of the following sectors: NGO (data activism), judiciary, software development (small AI cooperative, freelance full-stack development[2], data labelling), higher education, and academia (HCI). We speak English as a second language with varying levels of fluency. Our Latin American identities strongly drive our experiences and thus, our research, yet we do not attempt to speak for the whole region [54]. We each came to the project and the research with an interest in non-profit AI system development, and with a commitment to accountability that goes beyond the technical sphere and into process and relational aspects.

[1]We acknowledge that the term includes a range of very diverse struggles, and we include queer feminism, black and indigenous feminism, feminisms against ableism and transfeminism within the *feminisms* (in plural) that we refer to in this article.
[2]This co-author was employed at Aerolab, a small digital product agency at the time of the development process.

We are intersectional feminists [27] and have an orientation to social justice. We align with the feminist epistemological tradition initiated by Haraway [53] (which deviates from an androcentric universal) and continued by Maffia and Suárez Tomé [41, 77], among others in Latin America. We believe that recognising the situatedness of knowledge [53] is a way of producing knowledge more (not less) rigorously. Moreover, we attempt to practise the horizontal production of knowledge [24] and, more specifically, we are in line with Garcia et al. who place *"activist and academic knowledge on equal standing"* [3:2]. Although the first author is an HCI researcher, we deliberately avoid the researcher/researched positioning and we see ourselves as 'long-term allies' [97], with the first author considering herself an 'academic accomplice' [5] of the DataGénero NGO and its members.

Inspired by Leal et al. [68], we disclose how each of us became a co-author. There are no hierarchical job relationships among us, which gave us a certain level of freedom in undertaking this research together. The initiative to write this article stems from the AymurAI project coordinators (A2, A4, and A1). A2, A3, A4 and A9 are members of DataGénero. A4 has been working for 8 years in open data policies in Criminal Court Number 10 (Buenos Aires, Argentina), which includes transparency policy work, accountability and civic participation. A3 and A9 became co-authors given their background in qualitative research and their future involvement in the ongoing AymurAI project. The rest of the co-authors were invited to join on the basis of their participation in the development process (providing autobiographical data was not a condition for authorship).

1.2 A note on the term 'AI'

In recent years, Suchman [107] and Whittaker [116] have invited others to reject narratives that present the term 'AI' as a one-of-a-kind, ahistorical technological agent with mystical capabilities and autonomy. Central to this critique is the question that they both posed: *"what are we talking about when we talk about 'AI'?"*. For Whittaker, merely answering this question is an exercise in highlighting the *"mutability"* of the term. In her piece, she challenged the pervasive ahistorical perspective by tracing the genealogy of the current 'AI' label, showing how and when a *"handful of tech companies"* got to *"(re)define the AI field"*, rebranding machine learning and other data-intensive computational approaches through the *"marketing hook"* [116:52] offered by the term 'AI'. In the same vein, Suchman critiqued a *"strategic vagueness"* [107:6] in using the term as a signifier for a supposedly well-known yet implicit referent (i.e. as if it were 'a thing' that exists in the world and does not require clarification). To practically challenge this *"thingness"*, Suchman echoed Cummings' call [28] to demand from *"those asserting the efficacy of AI"* that they *"clarify the sense of the term and its differentiation from more longstanding techniques of statistical analysis"* [107:7]. Writing in 2023, Suchman reminded us that at the time, the term could be *"read as a label for currently dominant computational techniques and technologies that extract statistical correlations (designated as patterns) from large datasets, based on the adjustment of relevant parameters according to either internally or externally generated feedback"* [107:5].

Aligned with this important critique (and with Tucker [112]), in this paper, we have tried to use concrete technical terms when we talk about specific computational techniques and technologies. When needed, we refer to the contemporary use of the term 'AI', i.e. the label that Suchman demystifies. In these cases, we also draw from McQuillan's perspective: *"AI, as we know it, is a kind of computing, but it's also a form of knowledge production, a paradigm for social organization and a political project"* [80:2].

2 RELATED WORK

We situate our study within the relevant work in HCI and adjacent fields focusing on feminist approaches to AI research and development, reflexivity in the creation of AI systems, and critical perspectives on data and technology from Latin America.

2.1 Feminist approaches to AI research and development

Scholars in HCI and adjacent fields have applied feminist lenses in studying and engaging with the fields of AI and data science at different levels. They have produced critiques at the level of specific projects [93], data practices [88], subfields such as XAI [60] and NLP [30], and the dominant logics of AI and data science as fields [1, 25, 46, 51, 65, 108]. These analyses and evaluations are essential to deconstruct and challenge the hegemonic landscape. Our work builds upon this scholarship by upholding a critical alternative to the dominant logic in our own AI system development process, employing feminist perspectives from the onset.

A growing body of technically-implicated critical work at the intersection of the HCI and AI fields has shown how feminist perspectives can be applied to AI development, often at the level of methods and techniques [17, 52, 70, 72]. For example, Klumbytė et al. [64] present speculative design workshops shaped by critical concepts from intersectional feminist scholarship, to design machine learning systems that reorient fairness to justice. We share with all these authors the interest in recruiting AI practitioners and researchers to critical (and in particular intersectional feminist) ways of working. With the same goal, higher-level approaches are emerging, proposing frameworks, principles or guidelines for researchers and practitioners, such as iterations of data feminism for the field of AI research [63], and even entire subfields, such as Human-Centred Data Science [4]. Although implicated in both technical development and the adoption of feminist perspectives, our work does not propose a new method or technique for the AI field, nor a set of broadly applicable principles. Instead, we offer an example of feminist development of an AI project, based on our accounts and reflections of the process.

In HCI and adjacent fields, looking into data projects framed as data science or data visualisation, we find relevant examples that use data feminism principles [111] or feminist epistemologies [50] to support housing justice work. However, in these fields, published research about concrete AI development projects that explicitly depart from a feminist approach and apply it along the whole AI pipeline is scarce. To our knowledge, the main published exemplar is Suresh et al.'s work [109], who apply data feminism principles to the participatory design of machine learning systems with activists in the context of feminicides. Our case adds to this line of work,

providing a Latin American perspective. Bridging research and activism in the region, we find ongoing feminist projects of AI development such as [78, 94, 124], as well as the research agenda towards feminist development of AI proposed by the Latin American and Caribbean hub of the f<A+I>r network [96]. This shows that Latin American activists and researchers have been at the forefront of this area: Critical HCI should not miss the opportunity to learn from them.

2.2 Reflexivity in AI development

Since the calls by boyd and Crawford [16], Elish and boyd [36], Selbst et al. [103], and Kulynych et al. [66] to acknowledge the situatedness of data science practices and the importance of social actors and real-world context, the value of taking a reflexive stance has been gaining space. Grounded in empirical studies of data practices (often in but not limited to annotation in AI development), HCI research features reflexivity-based (e.g. [18]) and power-aware documentation techniques (e.g., [83]). These approaches go beyond recognition and into understanding and working with subjectivity in data science, and above all, they start discussing power rather than bias [8, 62, 82]. Our work, as informed by feminist epistemologies both in practice and when retrospectively reflecting upon it, is in line with this view, presenting a self- and relationally-reflexive account of our feminist process. In turn, our attention shift from outcomes to processes aligns with Selbst et al.'s recommendations to adopt a process-oriented approach that avoids 'traps' related to solutionist framings in machine learning [103].

When it comes to reflexive accounts of specific AI development projects encompassing the whole pipeline, we find as the main exemplars the work by Suresh et al. [109], and a recent autoethnography about the creation of a customised chatbot [74]. When also including relevant data science and data visualisation projects, feminist-theory-informed ethnographies of housing justice become salient [50, 111]. We add to the emergent space created by these works, through a collaborative autoethnography that visibilizes the feminist work required in our Latin American project. By doing so, our study also sits with scholarship on labour in the AI and data science pipeline [87, 101], which includes research on exploitation of data annotators [81, 117], of low-paid workers that do the actual work behind products marketed as 'AI' [47], and broader feminist critiques of data science [32].

2.3 Latin America in critical HCI

Within critical HCI, a growing interest lies in learning from Latin America, with works highlighting what this region can offer to the field of HCI rather than focusing on its deficits [2, 48, 114, 120], making a call to citational justice [22, 98], and advocating for a shift from a mainstream-margin relationship with the Global North to a pluriversal configuration [99, 119]. Latin American perspectives in critical HCI are starting to appear, including indigenous [49], activist [3], decolonial [118], among others. In particular, initiatives to bridge the thriving data activist world from Latin America with HCI research begin to emerge [3], which build on the long history of activism-led social change that characterises the region –birthplace of movements such as, e.g., Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, Zapatistas, Ni Una Menos, Marea Verde, and LGBTQI+ rights movements.

We find strong inspiration in these works. In particular, from [3] we take upon the call to *"challenge hegemonic knowledge production around data and data practices" [3:2].* To us, the pluriversal approach to HCI [99] is also enacted in the authorship of our article: The practitioners and activists implicated in technological development are not objects of study, but authors telling of their work in the first person, similar to [68, 97]. And, in using Latin American feminisms to contextualise our reflections, we are expanding the literature pool that critical HCI can draw from.

3 THE AYMURAI PROJECT: MISSING JUSTICE DATA ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN LATIN AMERICA

Gender-based violence (GBV) affects the lives of women and LGBTIQ+ people worldwide. This type of violence –defined as harmful acts towards a person or a group of people based on their gender [125]– can take many shapes, including physical, sexual, psychological, economic, and political. In Latin America, the absence of traceable, high-quality data regarding GBV is a pressing issue. The public mostly finds out about the cases that become news pieces, often portraying decontextualised accounts of feminicides. Recently, data projects from individual women and civil society have started to shed light on this problem [126–128].

We take inspiration from these precedents in our attempt to understand GBV cases before they become feminicides –focusing on injuries, threats, harassment, sexual abuse, etc. Justice data is one possible source of GBV data that tells us how violence unfolds, and even if not all cases get judicialised, it provides a valuable entry point to understand the phenomenon. Yet, the lack of transparency in the judicial handling of GBV in the region translates into low reporting rates, distrust in the justice system, and limited access to justice [123, 129]. To address these interdependent issues, some courts in Argentina have begun to manually open data from judicial rulings, which is a tedious and time-consuming task.

3.1 Project chronology

In partnership with Buenos Aires' Criminal Court Number 10, who apply open justice and open government practices (and where A4 has worked since 2016), DataGénero identified the need to provide technological support and training to courts so they could open their data securely and efficiently. In turn, the NGO partnered with an HCI researcher (A1) in the frame of the <A+> alliance's pilot programme in 2022. First, the project's coordination team (A2, A4, A1) identified the potential of computational techniques (including but not limited to NLP machine learning models) to generate and maintain anonymised datasets that help understand GBV and support public policymaking. Before the funding was granted, an expert committee appointed by the funder analysed the proposal from an ethical and technical perspective.

The team coordinated the process of creating the AymurAI tool. We partnered with an AI worker cooperative (Collective AI), a small digital product agency (Aerolab), and formed a team of data labellers whose remuneration took into account the cognitive and emotional labour involved in working with GBV data. The process started with interviews and contextual inquiries with A4 to learn about the court's existing practices, team workshops to establish

requirements and constraints, and meetings with Aerolab to refine interaction styles and visual design. In parallel, DataGénero provided training to the developers and data labellers on gender perspectives and the project's background. The technical development took six months. We tested the prototype throughout the process. Project documentation produced by the coordination team includes a project diary, digital boards, slide presentations, and technical reports for the funder. The tool is auditable, its code is open, and its models are available[3].

3.2 Ethical considerations

To preserve the privacy of individuals mentioned in the rulings, AymurAI was trained exclusively with documents where all the personal data had been changed for fake data by court staff, with the judge's approval and support, and under the supervision of A4. The court staff are the only ones who have access to real rulings as part of their daily work, as they are those who produce, process, and anonymise them manually before making them available, since 2016. This means that no member of the project external to the court had access to any real personal data at any time. Nevertheless, and in the interest of following good data handling practices, the rulings were treated with extreme care, as if they were real: never uploaded to online repositories; labelled in the court after training the labelling team; and stored on encrypted, password-protected hard-drives for transportation from the court to Collective AI to train models offline. The development process did not involve access to or collection of personal data by the team, nor did it involve research with participants. AymurAI is a desktop application, designed to be installed directly on the servers of the Judicial Council (as all judicial applications are in Argentina, securely, centrally, and monitored by the Council's cybersecurity team).

The use of any AI system in criminal justice requires careful and ethical consideration, given its potential short- and long-term impacts on individuals and societies. AymurAI was created by the initiative of the courts, which already had an established practice of manually opening their judicial data. It is a data infrastructure application [121], not a risk prediction or judicial decision-making tool. This means that it works exclusively with existing documents, written by court staff after the judge has made a judicial decision (not before). Deliberately, it was created not to participate in producing or advising on judicial decisions or rulings, nor in the algorithmic generation of legal texts based on a decision, nor in predicting human behaviour or the risk of committing crimes. Its functionalities are limited to anonymising text documents for publishing judicial rulings, and extracting relevant fields to maintain anonymised datasets. In both cases, the process is semi-automated and requires an expert to complete, correct, and validate the results.

3.3 Technical implementation

AymurAI automates the extraction and anonymisation of GBV data from judicial rulings, using NLP techniques. The architecture consists of three main stages: preprocessing, inference, and postprocessing. During preprocessing, the judicial rulings are segmented into paragraphs and normalised by removing multiple spaces, accents, and special characters. These paragraphs serve as the minimum unit of analysis for parallel processing. The main models, developed using the Flair framework and a BiLSTM-CRF architecture with BETO embeddings (a variant of BERT trained on a Spanish corpus), perform Named Entity Recognition (NER) for both data extraction and anonymisation. A separate model (in native PyTorch) was designed to classify paragraphs corresponding to judicial decisions within the rulings. It uses BETO embeddings along with successive layers of 1D convolution and max-pooling, generating final predictions through a linear layer and a softmax layer. During the postprocessing phase, the system refines the extracted information through subcategorisation, using both regular expressions and semantic similarity techniques. For the latter, Google's Universal Sentence Encoder Multilingual QA model is employed, improving accuracy. Irrelevant decisions for analysis are filtered out, while dates and times are reformatted to ensure consistency. Finally, in the document anonymisation pipeline, the system also replaces the detected entities in the original documents with a token representing the corresponding category.

[3]https://github.com/aymurai, https://huggingface.co/aymurai

4 Method

Our study departed from the question of what it meant and what characterised doing this AI development project using a feminist approach from Latin America. To honour our feminist commitments (Section 1.1), we needed a method that would allow us to collectively and reflexively construct a narrative about the project, and in particular, one that centred our development process and the work involved, not just its technical outcomes. We identified the need to reflect first-hand on the project holistically, taking into account our sociocultural context while foregrounding our own experiences and maintaining multivocality, to truly co-create our research results [43]. We also needed to accommodate remote collaboration and varying degrees of availability, with only one full-time researcher in the team. Finally, we needed a method that could be applied retrospectively.

Given these goals and constraints, we found collaborative autoethnography (CAE) to be suitable. CAE is a multi-researcher type of autoethnographic approach involving the iterative collection of autobiographical material and its interpretation as a team, to get *"a meaningful understanding of the sociocultural phenomena"* in this data [20:24]. In CAE, researchers self-interrogate in cooperative, power-sharing ways, *"engender[ing] the practice of community"* and allowing for rich, deep collaborative learning [20:138].

Autoethnographic approaches are becoming recognised as valuable in HCI (for a literature review, see [61]), and increasingly employed in critical [6, 48], and more specifically activist [69] and feminist research [37, 56, 59] in this field. Kaltenhauser et al. [61] remind us that autoethnographic approaches are aligned with feminist epistemologies and research that recognise the situated nature of knowledge and the centrality of the researchers' lived experiences. What is more, García and Cifor pose duoethnography (a type of CAE conducted by two researchers) as a feminist method, given its *"emphasis on the personal as a valid site of knowledge production, its intended goal of exposing and interrogating power relations, and its emphasis on relational ethics"* [43:2]. In a similar vein, Howell et al.

propose their trioethnography about failure in HCI design research as a 'feminist tactic', and highlight that retrospective autoethnographies allow the team to go deeper into topics usually glossed over in project documentation or even left out [59]. Finally, Chang et al. point to 'research as activism' as one of the applications of the CAE method, arguing that publishing a CAE on a topic constitutes an activist effort towards justice and equality around such topic, functioning as a *"tool for critical work"* [20:147].

Following the recommendations by [20, 43], we formed the team, decided the focus, selected a collaboration model, defined our roles and boundaries, and considered our ethical principles. We selected a partial collaboration model where the first and second authors (A1, A2) contributed dialogic first-person reflections to the data pool. The third author (Interviewer) conducted semi-structured interviews with 5 team members (A2, A4-7) and the last author (Moderator) moderated the study. The first author proposed an initial design of the prompts and the semi-structured interview guide, iterated collaboratively with the interviewer and the moderator. Our praxis of relational ethics implied using our ethical principles to shape our roles and boundaries, which we wrote in an agreement emerging from conversations along the project. The agreement included the reason why we were conducting a CAE, that we value knowledge stemming from experience, and that we respect and celebrate difference within the team. We gave ourselves permission to ponder how much to share (weighing transparency with privacy and with protecting valuable links with people and organisations involved), to share some reflections only with each other, or only with the moderator or with the interviewer, to exclude certain parts from the report, and to change our mind along the process. We also committed to mutual patience and understanding, accepted the discomfort that can come with being self-referential, and allowed ourselves to challenge the prompts. We knew that our familiarity would enable us to keep a level of informality and flexibility in crafting our answers that contribute to transparency, as socially close autoethnographers are less concerned with saying the "wrong" thing [67]. The study did not imply recruiting participants and it did not involve collecting sensitive personal data. Still, we used an informed consent approach, pseudonymised the data during transcription, and kept raw data offline.

The interview guide focused on the interviewee's participation and experiences throughout the project, including motivations and values (and their influence in their decisions), challenges and their resolution (and how these link to the project's local and Latin American context and to feminist perspectives), lessons learned, successful practices, gratifying moments, and advice for other teams. In parallel with running the interviews, to aid self-reflection and recollection, the first two authors separately looked at traces of the project (funding proposal, digital boards from workshops, technical reports, slides, newspaper articles, project website and repositories, and our project diary). We then launched the prompt phase. The set of 6 prompts, chained as shown in Fig. 1, drew from Latin American feminisms to invite reflection. Inspired by the exchange, the moderator produced their own written self- and meta-reflections along the prompt-based stage. We closed with a meeting of the first three and last authors, for which we prepared by reading all the data. In the meeting, the moderator facilitated a discussion between A1 and A2 about the last prompts, and the interviewer

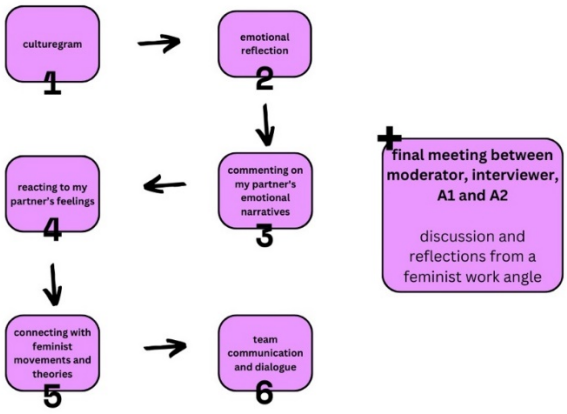

Figure 1: Prompt-based phase of the CAE process

provided reflections on the interviews, relating them to prompt answers. We finished the meeting discussing the characteristics of the feminist work that marked the development process. The meeting was recorded and added to the data pool.

In autoethnographic approaches, there is no consensus on whether data generation is separate from analysis and interpretation [20]. In our case, the prompts invited A1 and A2 to go from the self ('auto') to the sociocultural context ('ethno'), constituting a first wave of analysis/interpretation, together with the moderator's reflections. A second wave was conducted in preparation for the closing meeting, and during the meeting, in which we co-constructed a set of initial themes. A final wave involved a close reading and memo-ing of the full data pool by the first author, guided by the initial themes but open to nuance them and propose new ones. Our interpretation was further refined through conversation and the writing itself of the CAE report. The final report, iterated by all co-authors, is presented in the next section. In it, S is the court secretary, F is the front-end developer, B is the back-end developer, and L is the data labeller.

5 Findings

5.1 Not just an interdisciplinary team, but a team open to transdisciplinary modes of work

A key in our process was not just the composition of the team, but the attitude of its members. We held an openness to transdisciplinarity and articulation, where everyone was aware that their own skills and knowledge were different and could contribute to parts of the process, but not encompass its totality [15]. We knew also that our roles were not to perform our tasks isolated from the rest.

Instead, we were predisposed to constructive exchange and help, valuing learning from others and their expertise. In other words, we felt and thus we knew that we were in this project together [19].

This attitude can be seen all over our process. For example, in the importance given to getting to know the people from each sector in the project as soon as it started: *"It was important at a preliminary stage to get familiar with the topic, get to know the actors involved, and step away a bit from purely technological development, to think about the bigger picture" (B)*, as well as of getting familiar with the format of legal rulings, with law, and with AI techniques, even for members whose task did not include model development. We did not try to reinvent the wheel, and we worked instead to know what was already there in terms of both technologies and existing practices in the court. This respect for existing workers' strategies had a positive impact, as we were able to leverage the court's documentation as part of their 'transparent and clear language' policy.

It is clear from all our accounts that we made considerable effort to speak the same language, crossing disciplinary borders and creating a common ground, learning from each other:

"So that there is not so much obscurity in the processes and that everything can be talked about plainly, so everyone is aware of what is happening" (A2);

"Explaining the whole legal aspect to someone who knows almost nothing about it takes a lot of time, a lot of patience. There was also a lot of willingness [from DataGénero] to learn about technical things" (F).

However, transdisciplinarity work was not without tensions. For example, our reflections showed that for A2, the academic view of the project was less important than its development, and more of a background accompaniment, almost a way to "audit" the methodology:

"That you [A1] were constantly observing and somewhat auditing from a more feminist, ethical, and methodological perspective what we were doing was also great because we had the chance to think, not just do, because sometimes the software industry proposes things that are very structured, and well, we wanted to do it differently, and it was great to also think about the 'how' of it".

Our differences were present in the way A1 and A2 conceptualised what constitutes *making/doing* and whether *thinking* is part of it. These differences invited us to discuss other hierarchies such as writing and developing, where, for A1, writing in the context of this project had been both a vehicle to obtain funding for it and to communicate *"the hard work".*

5.1.1 Goals made clear to the entire team. For us, doing transdisciplinarity well, was doing it with transparency. The coordination team visibilized all the aspects of the complex task to carry out: The whole team was aware of the main goal of the project. Objectives were not compartmentalised or hidden, directly reflecting our values: Horizontal, transparent structures built on cooperation and from a collective place of solidarity. Everyone knew why they were doing what they were doing, and what others were doing: "Everyone knew the objective, but not just the objective of their little square metre of work, but the overall objective of the tool. And I think that's distinctive compared to similar tech projects" (Interviewer). For example, L said that as soon as he was invited to work in the project, "the context, the objective, and the values of the project were communicated in practice (...) and the importance of confidentiality", and that this was reinforced during the training given to data labellers: "This idea was quite present, of what the model's perspective was, why it was being done, what the values or the social view behind doing all this were".

Transparency also opened doors *"at the moment of asking the IT department of the Judicial Council for AymurAI to be installed on the Council's servers; even though it's not a strange tool or anything like that, explaining what the tool's objective is, why we want to use it, why we want it on the servers"* (S). This was particularly valuable given the *"cultural barrier that society in general and the judiciary, in particular, have regarding opening data and transparency, [the need] that people know what the judiciary does, how judges make their decisions"* (S). And, her involvement in the project made S feel *"proud of what we do [at the court]"* and grateful "*for the opportunity to show what a court does, how it works. (...) To have the peace of mind that if someone wants to know what I do in my daily work, they can find out"* (S).

At the same time, we recognised that transparency might put a team at a disadvantage (such as potential suppliers receiving information on the available funding before providing a quotation), but we still chose to take the risk. Our experiences indicate that transparency, in fact, does not seem to be so commonly practised in IT in our region –similar perhaps to the 'fake-it-til-you-make-it' culture prevalent in Silicon Valley [28]. For example, A2 narrates about a recent encounter: *"There's something with transparency that helps a lot. The other day I had a meeting with [authority in national human rights institution], and they told me how refreshing it was to see an IT person who doesn't lie to them, who doesn't try to sell their tool as doing more than what it does".* The fact that transparency was one of the values that distinguished our process is part of what makes it an alternative to the dominant landscape.

5.1.2 Fluid communication and quick resolution of conflicts. The mechanism through which we put transdisciplinary in practice was communication work. All of us brought up this topic as a plus of our collaboration. For example, L felt a good balance of autonomy and availability: "I was able to clear up doubts without problems (...) Once I understood the task it was easy to do it autonomously (...) but the contact was clear. We had a chat group, that was good" (L).

Working in our communication involved not denying the existence of conflicts, and solving them actively, quickly, and with care [35]. It was, perhaps, the opposite of Silicon Valley's 'move fast and break things': rather 'move fast to repair things'. We recognised several *"moments of tension"* (A2) and *"friction"* (S) in the process, related to staff changes in the front-end agency (perceived by F as problems of *"scope definition")* and workload distribution in the back-end cooperative. These were solved through *"understanding"* (F) and by assessing the situation and improving workload among coworkers (B). A2 posed the geographical distance (as the team was distributed in three locations) as a challenge, which added an extra layer of coordination work (*"Distance is always a problem (...), it's a thing I'm dealing with it, making sure the message and what you want to say come across in a loving way, and not from a*

place of scolding or policing"), and A1 highlighted the emotion work [7, 57] of managing one's own anxiety about the parts for which one felt most responsible. Finally, our autoethnography resurfaced moments of vulnerability and insecurities. For example, A1 felt disoriented at several moments along the process, as she was playing a role very different from her usual HCI researcher role leading academic design projects, to which after a few exchanges, A2 responded: *"Putting oneself in the other person's shoes to communicate and have empathetic conversations (...) In the face of uncertainty, vulnerability, the other side is trust and community bonds*".

5.1.3 Cultivating relationships based on camaraderie, trust, and joy. Our ways of working were marked by 'compañerismo' (camaraderie), and it is clear in all our accounts that we enjoyed working together. Interestingly, S said:

"Camaraderie emerged throughout the project. People in different places, even in different parts of the world, in different time zones, meeting at, I don't know, 6:00 AM because one of the people involved in the project was in another country".

A1 reacted to reading S's story:

"I liked that S highlighted things like camaraderie but that the example she gave was something I interpret as almost sacrificial. The fact that she called that camaraderie, I think, has value. She didn't call it commitment to the project, or motivation, she called it camaraderie, which is a relational value, as if you were doing it for the people you were working with, and not for the project's productivity".

A2, for whom it was a *"healing"* experience to read the other members' accounts and find out that we were *"on the same boat"*, responded:

"It makes me think a lot about what Paola Ricaurte says about developing technology from a place of cooperation. What part of the capitalistic logic you're breaking when you're not focusing on productivity? (...) Yes, there's a process that involved development, and the development itself was an objective: We wanted it to exist, we didn't just want to stay with the process. But it was built from another paradigm, where the focus wasn't solely on the outcome, but on the outcome through a process with other logics leading to it".

A sense of belonging, gratitude, and getting fond of the people in the team were all salient experiences: "*thank you all [in DataGénero] once again for being the driving force behind all of this. I think everything you do is incredibly important, and it truly fills us with joy and pride to be able to accompany you"* (B). These experiences bled into getting fond of the project. Our accounts ubiquitously show a clear intention of *doing* in this project, but in particular of *doing well*, that the project succeeds, even for F who at the time worked for the front-end agency and did not have the possibility of choosing the project. Here, F's account captures the will to perform a task 'perfectly' due to these feelings:

"When I started, there was nothing [in the front end]. It was built from scratch. That really makes you grow fond of the project. That's partly why I put so much dedication and effort into doing everything perfectly, which is something that doesn't happen very often because, many times, when a product is being sold, you try to finish it as quickly as possible to make the client happy with what was done. But this felt different in the sense that I really wanted it to succeed, beyond just delivering it and that's it" (F).

Similarly, B mentions as part of his work *"making easier the work of the front-end developers"*, and F details having worked extra to make easier the work of future developers joining the project: *"I also realised that some things I had done [at the beginning] weren't that well done. So, I took the time, and even though it wasn't part of the scope to make improvements in those areas, I did it just in case someone had to work on it later, to make it more comfortable, at least, for those people".*

Hand in hand with camaraderie, we cultivated trust, not just with each other, but also between the organisations involved, which was crucial for the success of the process, as weaved in by Moderator:

"We achieved this because the court trusted us, and trusted us a lot, and you can also see it in the way we worked, how we handled conflicts, and in the outcome, and in why we did the project. (...) Above all, with Collective AI we developed a bond beyond money, and that doesn't happen in other places in the world. So, there's a feminist principle that we put into play around trust and dialogue".

Our reflections also attest to the joy that this project has brought to us as individuals but especially how this joy is shared across the team. Our accounts of joy are often intermingled with feelings of pride. For example, B's most gratifying moments relate to: *"The result of one's own work functioning properly (...) being usable by anyone who downloads the program and follows the instructions (...) Knowing that this tool can be used in that particular court and that it will greatly simplify the work of the people who have this task, I find it incredibly important (...) It's a reason for celebration and fills us with pride to know that what we've been working on gained such an important recognition as the one from UNESCO"* (B).

The sources of pride are often located in having done work and seeing, in turn, how this work inserts itself and fits into something bigger, done by a team, in collaboration with organisations that we want to 'collaborate' with –both in the sense of helping and contributing, and in the sense of working side by side. Similarly, the pride stemming from the regional and international recognition that the project spurred was referred to in collective terms.

Besides external validation regarding the outcome, the joy and pride of having built an AI system through an alternative process was central, as illustrated by A2's account:

"We're opening the conversation about how to create technologies from this perspective, to say, 'Hey, what's been done so far isn't so ok, there are other ways. They exist, and we can show that they exist.' We moved from theory or talk, to action, and that's where there's usually a short circuit (...) Well, we thought about how to do it, and we can talk about all the challenges we faced and the issues we resolved along the way to say, 'Well, this too can happen in software development'".

Our experiences of joy were not limited to the development process, but were also forward-looking. S, for example, is enthusiastic about using the system in her daily work at the court and optimistic about how it will support her and her coworkers' tasks ("*In the court, we have been doing everything manually. So it's also about making life easier for the people working in the court, who are convinced that what we're doing is right and that we want to keep doing it. If you offer me something that speeds up the process and automates it, I'll be in!*"). Likewise, F is excited that the system –unlike the more common landing page developments–, is *"a product that gets used, that has a goal beyond looking at it and looking nice".*

5.2 Commitment to key causes as enabler

Our autoethnography allowed us to realise that the team shared a not just declarative but pragmatic commitment to three interlinked key causes: gender equality, data protection, and open software. All three causes represent values around justice, care, and community. And, in spite of requiring more work, this commitment was instrumental in making the project a reality. Far from being a barrier, it fueled our efforts. In a sense, 'the political' had an enabling effect on what might appear to be technical.

This is seen in different moments in our process. From the team building stage, where A2 considered important that *"the people we work with at least share some of these values. I'm not saying they need to be feminists because, well, there are a lot of people in software development who aren't"*; to the back-end development, where the cooperative agreed and operationalised data protection practices that included, e.g., disabling external tools that support programming, and modifying version control routines to make sure the repository was safe to be uploaded. The commitment to gender equality is also manifested in, e.g, how significant it is for S that AymurAI exists, as she sees its use as a concrete means to start effecting change, while considering both short- and long-term impact: *"the truth is that because of what we did, now it's like, 'well, look, your excuses are over, that it's too much work, that it's difficult, that it can't be done'. Today, there's already a tool, a desktop application that you don't even need internet connection to use. It's very easy to access, to use, you don't have to make 750 million clicks. It's very user-friendly".*

The orientation to open software was seen as one more way to build community:

"I also like that there's a free software policy, in this case open source. Because on a personal level and from our organisation, we also value being able to collaborate with the whole open AI ecosystem. And I also think that in our country and the region in general, it's important for the justice system to be able to rely on this type of technological tools with these kinds of goals" (B).

Also aligning her values with her actions, A2 reclaims a *"pro-idle time activism"* as self-care, which we see as a powerful example of the personal being political, as a type of work, and simultaneously as an enabler of her long-term commitment. What all these accounts show is that our commitments were enacted. As S puts it: *"The truth is that these values arise because they are intrinsically linked to the creation of the tool".*

Finally, B's advice to other AI development teams captures the essence of this theme:

"that it's important to be convinced or committed to a cause. That you can contribute from your own place. Well, for me, for us, we contributed from a perhaps more technical aspect, we are the ones behind the technological development, but it's not the technological development itself that motivates us most, but rather the goal and what drives it. The cause behind this particular project, and I think that's something important (...) That they don't lose sight, beyond the ones and zeros on the computer, of the purpose behind what they're doing. And when it comes to social projects, all of that is very valuable" (B).

B's advice, thus, centres commitment as a driver of personal contribution, which is necessarily partial and a piece of a bigger picture. He recognises that in spite of one's contribution pertaining to a specific area, one's motivation can come from elsewhere, and calls developers to use their own skills to change the status quo (while not claiming that he or his work can ever fix the social problem in focus). And, at the same time, B reminds them to not get lost in the technical, i.e. invites them to perform the work of keeping perspective.

5.2.1 Gender perspectives as central, thus transversal. Team members were not just well-trained in their own areas, had a will to articulate across them, and clarity on the main goal: They also had (or received during the project) concrete training in GBV, gender perspectives and their intersections with data. These perspectives were central to the project and thus made into a transversal concern from the beginning. The coordination team did not have, then, to 'intervene' in specific moments to apply these perspectives as a patch. On the contrary, there was an initial alignment reinforced through ongoing feminist work, including not just training but regular conversations. The work put into this is evidence of how seriously DataGénero approached the project.

A fundamental strategy to maintain gender perspectives in focus was visibilizing what was behind the data –its meaning in the real world– and honouring it:

"We often talked about gender violence, what I didn't want was for everything to just become another category (...) to strip away the weight of what we were really doing. So, every now and then, there were explanations about why something was done this way or what it really meant so they would keep it in mind, especially with the front and backend teams, because otherwise, it all turns into data at some point. So, it was about not removing the human and real component from the issue, seeing it as something real that happens to people, and that behind it, there is pain, there is suffering, there is violence. (...) It becomes a bit automatic after a while, working with this data. And every now and then, it's good to check in and say: this is more than just data" (A2).

This resonates with Klein and D'Ignazio stating that *"the production of data can become a tool of intimacy, relationality, care, and memory work"* [63:10]. In our case, keeping GBV perspectives in the foreground when interacting with data had this effect. This is reflected in L's point of view:

"Many times, the data labelling task isn't so in contact with the subject of what you're labelling. They don't tell you what's behind it (...) Often you aren't very involved in what you're doing, and it's just 'labelling on and on', what used to be data entry. In that sense, it's interesting when the subject of a project is also interesting and so engaging" (L).

In this way, dealing with data on GBV did not become an 'automatised' task for the team members in close contact with it. In fact, L reflects on his data labelling task not being an *"automaton"* job, from both a cognitive and an emotional perspective:

"It's demanding because you have to read a lot of complex text, as is the case with court rulings. (...) The workload was reasonable in terms of the number of rulings each person had to handle, but it required a lot of time. And on top of that, labelling for this type of model isn't particularly easy. Sometimes (...) the unstructured data is quite messy (...) and finding a certain structure in that (...) isn't an

automaton task; you have to be fully aware of what you're doing at all times" (L).

"And an addition is that when you're not from the judicial world, or when you don't deal with gender violence situations in your job, suddenly coming across the description of a lot of situations, repeated instances of different forms of violence… A lot of things that add weight to the task (…) That's an additional emotional burden that leads to exhaustion. (…) You had to pace yourself" (L).

This 'pacing oneself' contrasts with for-profit developments (and especially extractivist ones) that require task completion as fast as possible. What is interesting here is that L's approach was not just driven by his values, but also by technical reasons, to produce high-quality labelling of documents, in order to achieve high-quality models:

"When dealing with such a complex issue as gender violence, especially the kind that gets judicialised, I think there's something about understanding gender perspectives. Not being unfamiliar with the issue. Understanding a bit about what things to look at and what to focus on… Beyond the formal scheme for labelling, like 'if it says this, label it like that', there's kind of a… let's call it a subjective element to reading what things to label and what not to. What things are more useful, what things you want to look at from a certain perspective. So, I think some minimum level of gender training has to be there (…) I think that beyond a basic understanding of the technical side, of how things are being done (which always helps the task of labelling in these models), it's always better for the models if the information is good, so there needs to be some of that [training]" (L).

L's reference to the apparent *if-this-then-that* logic of labelling and his realisation that it does not play that way in practice matches A2's account. And, going further, L does not pose subjectivity in data labelling as a problem, but reclaims an intentionality of using it in favour of quality. What L indicates is that using one's subjectivity and enacting a gender perspective in practice was functional to the technical problem.

5.2.2 Exercising a critical attitude towards the use of AI systems in social topics. During the process, we actively reflected on the 'nos' and the 'yeses' of using AI systems in the GBV realm and other social topics –meaning where it is acceptable and useful to resort to such systems, and where it should be avoided. For example, S's position on the role of AI systems in criminal justice is grounded on her trust towards her workplace, and her insider knowledge of the judiciary:

"Here [at the court] we have the fortune that the person who leads us is constantly thinking about administration improvements, whether it relates to the strictly judicial aspects or to our policy on open justice, thinking what is the best way to facilitate our work and get rid of all the bureaucratic work that many branches have, not only within the judiciary but in general. And thinking about automation, not fearing the use of AI. Of course, we must then consider the risks or reservations regarding it. We can think about different ways to mitigate risks in the use of these tools within the judiciary. But a key aspect is that we have someone who is constantly thinking about innovations and the use of technology, and as technology fundamentally permeates our lives, why shouldn't we use it here as well?" (S).

When it came to our 'yeses', we kept a situated look, considering the specific scope and goal within each context:

"Asking yourself what problem you want to solve and then seeing if artificial intelligence is the best way to do it and how, or what part of that problem it could address… The topic of prediction in AI is quite at hand, and how one can use data to predict something useful. However, when it comes to the social world, it becomes a bit tricky. So you always need to exercise extra caution about what you're actually doing when applying these models. Sometimes you might think you're achieving something and convince yourself that what you're doing works technically, but it could be ethically questionable. So I believe it's crucial to carefully consider the project beforehand. It's the most important thing –how and why you would do it that way. And if there isn't a better solution that doesn't necessarily involve AI. It's not suitable for everything" (L).

In particular, an anti-technolutionist take was evident in our accounts, even for the 'yeses'. For example, "*Globally, there is this trend towards pushing the agenda that AI can solve social problems, which has been bothering us. This fetish of using AI just for the sake of using AI for various issues, in this case, feminism, which we leveraged upon, but there was and still is a trend of many calls for funding to use AI for social issues instead of funding people who can actually solve these social problems. There isn't a genuine will to help feminisms or to approach problems from a gender perspective, but of using AI, as a fetish"* (A2).

Moreover, we agree that no matter how limited the scope of the 'yes', it was crucial for us that AI systems in our context do not make automated decisions, i.e. that the information identified from legal documents is not used until an expert in law confirms its validity. This critical attitude goes hand in hand with an awareness of the responsibility to have created a product that is going to be used by people: "*It's very irresponsible not to think about it in the long term, because there will be people who will, precisely, need it. And without that tool, there will be tasks that will have to be done manually or will be completely abandoned. So we are creating a tool on which people will later depend, and that is a huge responsibility. And it needs to be considered in terms of funding, planning, and sustainability"* (A2).

5.3 The 'double standard': 'On our own terms' but also 'at the height of' the Global North

We noticed a tension between the perceived formality of organisational structures from the Global North, and the informality, flexibility and improvisation attributed to Latin American cultures. On the one hand, we take ownership of and pride in our 'Southern' ways of working:

"A key aspect of the process was our ability to adapt to very complex work contexts. Yes, we did have funding and we are good at executing, but we are also Latinas with multiple jobs and exploited. Throughout the process, we dealt with urgent issues and were very flexible at times, otherwise, we wouldn't have gotten anywhere (…) especially in Argentina, and in a crisis context" (Moderator).

And, we have confidence in how we undertook our development process, as it was thoughtful and caring –in A2's words, *"so careful, so obsessive, and so, so rigorous"*–, having established ourselves high-quality standards while navigating an ambiguous, uncertain context [39]. On the other hand, we experienced the need –at first sight, self-imposed, in hindsight, stemming from internalising

oppression– of being approved by this idealised formal, demanding Global North [76].

This was seen in our reflections about the effect that the origin of the funding had on us:

"I think the biggest demand, which we imposed on ourselves, no one imposed it on us, was the strict adherence to deadlines. We always worked with the goal of meeting the deadlines set in the contracts. It might sound obvious, but we realised that in some situations it could have been more flexible. For example, in the second stage of funding, it wasn't necessary to have the tool fully developed, and we already had it almost working, actually working, not on the court's computers, but on our personal ones. Our challenge had to do more with [believing] the fact that everything from the North works well and is good, and so we self-imposed demands to avoid, for example, that the funder thought that what we had done wasn't good enough, or that we weren't up to the level of the funding we received, while in reality, we were reaching each of the milestones" (S).

This shows that we (and especially, DataGénero) inhabit a space of wanting to work on our own terms, while also upholding a double standard that asks us to be 'at the height of' the Global North, revealing feelings of *"guilt of subordination"* (Interviewer). She elaborates: *"It calls my attention this double standard, of feeling that because one is from the Global South –without having been born with a silver spoon or with the advantages of small elites– one has to (...) meet the expectations of the funders, (...) and prove that it was possible. And all the interviewees pointed out that (...) we had to demonstrate that we were up to the task".*

This pressure to overachieve is intersectional, as *"it combines with other oppressions"* (Moderator), where *"feminism is always held to higher standards, and women are also held to higher standards"* (Moderator). A1 also perceives this burden in HCI research, where critical and feminist authors, authors who use first-person methods, and authors who work with communities are required to thoroughly justify their methodologies and choices to a level that other scholarly work is not subject to:

"That level of responsibility and auditability isn't expected of other papers. I'm in favour of us doing it this way, but I'd also like to ask, why do we have to do more work? Because there are word limits, everything we spend on these issues are words we then have to save from somewhere else. Where do we cut back, from the technical part? So we're still seen as: 'oh, yes, women, they provide soft skills contributions'" (A1).

Related to this, a second aspect where the struggle is present concerns the hegemony of the English language in the international sphere –both in academia and in public policy. For A1, having written the funding proposal in English was –albeit an ideologically uncomfortable experience– a *"double merit"* of the team, whereas Moderator felt strongly against the global *"academic system that rewards writing in English"*. A1 dwelled on her *"fear of being hypocritical, labelling this work as Latin American while talking about it in English. Is that an irreconcilable contradiction? If it's possible to speak Spanish in the UN, why CHI papers and CHI talks are in English?"*.

Yet another moment where the extra requirements become evident is when deciding which funding sources are deemed acceptable, and which we discard to, e.g., avoid contributing to the ethics washing of big tech corporations [91] in Latin America: *"it's us who choose not to be funded by [big tech companies]. That's another barrier. Because it's expected that the funding is, on top of everything, ethical, or else... And instead, in the Global North they have a stomach of steel for that"* (A2) to which Moderator replied: *"And they are the men of the world (...) They are guys and they are in the North. And that's the colonial inheritance and the capitalistic accumulation"*, and elaborated:

"Coloniality continues to operate. The money will come from the North because wealth is accumulated in the North. (...) Colonial logics have not been broken. The point is what you do when you receive the money, because you either reproduce colonial enclaves or you look for liberating ways to use it. Now, obviously, without money, from a subaltern position and doing collective work, you won't impact many people because, how do you expect us to do anything if they've been taking everything from us for 500 years? (...) If wealth is concentrated in the North, and we can't do anything about that... And the same goes for A+ and all the funds we might get. Of course they will be in the North, there's no money in the South, it was stolen".

In summary, we stand by our terms, but we deal with an added layer of work, to fit in a global system (where funding, respect and legitimacy come from) while fighting to make space for our terms in it. This is what made the funder's Executive and Scientific Committee a crucial figure in the viability of this project, without whom *"none of this would have happened. (. . .) Because of how they selected the projects to fund, trusting that even if the projects deviated from the script of what academia expected, they would still be able to achieve something. (. . .) When we applied, they were able to look beyond the degrees and credentials from each place to say, yes, we are going to support this"* (A2), which shows yet another actor that had to believe in the initiative.

5.4 Scarcity of resources, abundance of resourcefulness

Along the process, as in any real-world case, we encountered a variety of limitations stemming from the local and regional contexts. For example, the system had to work in the low-resource settings of the courts (e.g., staff computers with very limited computation capabilities, sometimes without internet connection). We needed to produce cross-platform yet light layers of software in a tight schedule (where Collective AI, Aerolab and the court used three different OS), and create models from a limited number of labelled documents that were powerful enough to deal with many categories and subcategories yet run on the courts' computers. We also had to account for the barriers to transparency in the judiciary (*"the little black box of the judiciary"* –S), while operating in the frame of the sociopolitical context of Argentina, where gender-related public policy and infrastructure is being dismantled and feminisms are being attacked (A2):

"The gender agenda was more present in the social context [in 2022]. In some ways, it was more conducive to the development of this type of project. Or at least, it wasn't as hostile as it might be now. There is something in the political context, especially national, but also a bit international that has started to erode those gender and feminist conquests. (...) I think the opportunity is still there, but we need to find another way to approach it from a communicational point of view" (L).

"I believe that today's context is challenging, in the sense that much of what is related to gender policies, at least from the government, is not only being questioned but also dismantled or directly going against all of it. We started in a context in which at least from a discursive standpoint, it supported and promoted gender issues. But I think today it's even more crucial to have projects like this because they continue to fight a battle that a few years ago was recognised and valued, but now somehow is being opposed also through public policies. So, I think today we face a difficult context in this sense, at least in our country. But I also think that there is a need to fight that battle and continue to support these kinds of initiatives" (B).

Our strategies to overcome these limitations banked on our resourcefulness, as captured by B:

"To address the problem of not having a lot of labelled information, we developed a module that artificially increased the amount of labelled data by making entity replacements (...) This also significantly improved the results of what the model learned to recognise (...) We managed to artificially increase the dataset with fake [synthetic] information, but that was useful for the model at the end of the day, and in that way, we bypassed that obstacle".

This speaks of a Latin American characteristic of thinking on the fly as part of our ways of working, historically familiar with unstable, uncertain environments. F's story on finding motivation in having to acquire new technical knowledge exemplifies his rather Latin American take on uncertainty: *"There is also a point of exploration, because it's something I didn't know how to do at the time, I had never done it. (...) I enjoyed a lot participating in that exploration*". This becomes meaningful when juxtaposed with these bits of the story: *"They [professional contacts] told me it was impossible or very difficult to do"* (F), and with L's reflections on what he learnt:

"The way to technically solve these problems, although I didn't review all the code, it was a quite good learning experience. Obviously, [I learned] that it is possible to carry out powerful and useful projects related to social aspects, if you have the will. Not necessarily with an economic goal. In data science and AI especially, that is a valuable experience" (L).

On some occasions, being resourceful meant being pragmatic while true to our feminist commitments. This is present in, e.g., recognising that *"the promise of AI"* is, in practical terms, a much more persuasive tool to get the interest of judges than *"the promise of feminisms"* (A2); together with offering an anonymisation feature (as all courts need to provide citizens with anonymised rulings) as an entry point for courts to discover the dataset creation feature; and with designing the UI *"to not look like the feminists' app"* (A2).

Another strategy was relying on transdisciplinary teamwork fueled by our commitments and the camaraderie and trust we cultivated (Section 5.1.3). In particular, the close alliance with the court was *"the key"* (A2). S reflected on the level of commitment that court workers showed: *"What we did on the court's side was quite a laborious task of replacing the personal data from the rulings with fake data to then hand it over to the teams".*

There is a regional proverb that goes "the house is small but the heart is big" –this captures well that the limitations lie in the systems and infrastructure, but the strengths lie in the people, and their relationships.

We wish to close our CAE report with B's advice to other teams that wish to build AI systems otherwise, as we feel it harmonises with all the themes we have presented:

"I would tell them that it is possible to develop open source software with social impact and that there are agencies, whether public or non-profit, that support this and are willing to finance these kinds of developments. I learned that all this is really possible, it's not merely an abstract ideal, but something that if you find the right people and can properly articulate between organisations, it is possible to develop meaningful projects and that thanks to these developments, a lot of people benefit. Not just the direct users, in the case of the tool, but also in the future, at the end of the day, society benefits from having public statistics on gender issues, which until now were lacking. And it's important to cover those gaps" (B).

6 Discussion

We now unpack how our findings point to one way of building AI systems otherwise, and we then discuss the role of feminisms in AI development and the use of AI development to support feminist causes. We hope to inspire reflection in HCI researchers and practitioners and, more broadly, those considering building technology in service of social justice causes, or choosing to build AI systems otherwise.

6.1 Building AI systems otherwise

One of the main takeaways from this work is that building AI systems in alternative ways to the dominant is, in the first place, possible and that ours has been a grounded and collective 'otherwise'. Before unpacking these three aspects, we wish to highlight that developing AI systems in counter-hegemonic ways should not be understood as a promise of 'better' technical outcomes –given that in any case, technical outcomes are not the whole picture. This is particularly relevant as long as AI systems' success keeps being narrowly defined by reducing performance metrics to technical metrics. In other words, technical metrics can never capture the actual impact of an AI system in the real world, given that performance metrics are "properties of systems in total", whereas technical systems are only subcomponents of sociotechnical ones [103:59]. And, as Selbst et al. remind us, "different social environments, actors, and social groups shape the kinds of technology that eventually becomes successful" [103:63]. In this vein, our interest in examining how we built an AI system otherwise should not be read as a general call for building more AI systems. On the contrary, we call for listening to and learning from experiences of building differently, in cases when careful, transdisciplinary investigation indicates that AI techniques are the right tool to address a technical challenge within a sociotechnical system. Simply put, we intend 'otherwise' to capture a plurality of 'how' we might build AI systems in counter-hegemonic ways, and, crucially, we argue that each 'how' must already contain the 'what', 'when', and 'why' to build, as well as 'who' builds and tells the story.

6.1.1 Possible. There is a clear pattern in our CAE around being surprised that "it was possible" to do this project. This is a testimony of how powerful the current material conditions of AI development are, as well as the imaginaries about them. Our recommendation for researchers and practitioners is to critically examine what makes

a counter-hegemonic approach appear "impossible", pinpointing which of those reasons are actually assumptions.

Our data also tells us that our context (the local and Latin American situation plus interlocking systems of oppression) and how we chose to work have added a burden with which other AI development projects may not have to deal with. This project, in a sense, is an example of what a Latin American team working from and for Latin America *can* in fact do in the technological world (but in particular in the AI technology world), one that moves away from the scripts in which we tend to be put: *resisting*, or *in need of saving* [79, 100]. We see this third option as inhabiting another *possible* world [38].

If the field of HCI is to be rebuilt as a pluriverse where this type of world fits [99, 119], researchers and practitioners will need to prepare and thrive in very different roles to the habitual, becoming more of an advisor, consultant, accompanying figure and accomplice [5], and less of a leading designer, technical guru or eloquent theorist that 'empowers', 'helps', or 'observes' communities. For example, if HCI researchers decide to refrain from leading a project, they might find a meaningful role in devising more horizontal and creative ways of co-producing and presenting the knowledge generated through the process. This will require a change in both their language and ways of thinking about participation. First steps in this direction have been taken by scholars warning about participation-washing in machine learning [105] and the burden of user and community participation in design [55]. Going further, we urge HCI researchers to analyse whether their participation in a project would facilitate its unfolding or would only add an academicist take. Put more bluntly, we argue that HCI researchers will have to consider, for each case, whether *they* should be the ones *participating* at all. And, were they to participate, they will have to not just grapple with tensions but share responsibility in envisioning this type of project in the long-term, inserted in the public sphere and depending, to a certain degree, on national states. Works that can serve as inspiration here are Whitney et al.'s 'tactics from below' [115] regarding maintenance of public digital infrastructure; Do et al.'s empathic 'sousveillance tools' for workers, grounded on care ethics [34]; and Kulynych et al.'s 'protective optimization technologies' to support the agency of marginalised actors in countering *"utilitarian forms of governance"* [66:10].

6.1.2 Grounded. Our study focuses on the feminist work we carried out because it is precisely in this work where our epistemological commitments are reflected. We did not use feminist theories (nor invoked values) in a declarative way –we instead enacted a feminist approach in each decision, strategy, and trade-off, especially when facing challenges and conflicts. Our CAE, in a sense, contains the ingredients that were required in our development process, but we are not able nor willing to provide a recipe with the exact amount and order. Furthermore, we did not depart from having a clear list of these ingredients –they were brewed over time. Our findings reveal how they played out in practice to make the development process a feminist one. In particular, they describe the interplay of the Latin American 'realities' we experienced and the 'theories' that we think with and resonate with these experiences. Along the way, we had to make quick, pragmatic decisions, which is a way of enacting feminisms –and it is also about what goes wrong [59] and what is tough. Doing this, we join others in HCI who have highlighted the importance of showing "feminism in action" [31] and of producing generative contributions that integrate feminist perspectives and HCI/Interaction design [9].

6.1.3 Collective. A latent aspect in our CAE is that everything in the process was *made* collective: goals, commitment, values, knowledge, information, conflicts, tensions, joy, pride, recognition. This is very much in line with Latin American feminisms, which have a historical tradition of collaborative and associative work [85]. Organised in assemblies and local networks for the last 40 years, the movements have been connecting women, lesbians, gays, trans people, and (more recently) nonbinary people across the region [12]. Another characteristic of these movements is their mix of black, indigenous, and urban feminisms. In recent years, the 'green wave' expanded from urban feminism in Argentina to Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, El Salvador, and Mexico, using the same symbols and methodologies for social claiming [11]. As we grew up in Latin America, we were familiar with these blurred boundaries, and with collective practices and decision-making in work projects. So, for us, working collectively was also a way to reflect our feminism and our understanding of the world.

Indeed, this orientation, pervasive in our process, did not 'happen' on its own: it was the fruit of deliberate decisions which, borrowing [120]'s "the work before the work," can be considered "the work within the work". Our take on building AI systems otherwise, then, proposes a way of working that is collective, transparent, horizontal, centred on people and their relationships, and requiring concrete, day-to-day feminist work. This resonates with Wong-Villacrés et al.'s call for HCI to value slow, collective, trust-based, and incremental transformations where technology is seen *"as an intermediary rather than an inevitable end"* [120:1]. On this note, we remind researchers and practitioners of the importance of first identifying which specific area of the social world they wish to have an impact on and of doing deep research on which sociotechnical systems (including digital and analogue technologies, practices, and communities) are already operating in such area. This might imply partnering on equal footing with social scientists [103] but also being part of –or having the will to co-create– an inter- or transdisciplinary team that balances technical with social perspectives and expertise and refrains from posing technology as a solution to societal problems.

6.2 Making spaces in AI development: feminisms in AI and AI for feminisms

Our study shows one way in which feminist perspectives can shape AI development processes in practice, to build AI systems otherwise, but also how AI techniques might be put at the service of social justice causes –when done carefully, resisting technosolutionism, maintaining a narrow scope in terms of functionality, and avoiding the replacement of human decision making. Both intersections between feminisms and AI development imply making new spaces outside the logics of the hegemonic landscape.

6.2.1 Feminisms in AI development. Overarching in our autoethnography is the importance of relationships in feminist developments of AI systems, the value of camaraderie understood as

companionship and horizontality, and the value of cultivating long-term alliances. This applies both within development teams and in the interaction with other feminist organisations. And, while scholars and the tech sector are currently trying to define 'feminist AI', we instead choose to speak about *feminisms in AI development* to highlight a plurality of movements and interconnected people, not technology. We call for feminist solidarity across disciplinary and geographic borders in acts, not words, as Mohanty reminds us that *"cross-cultural feminist work must be attentive to the micropolitics of context, subjectivity, and struggle, as well as to the macropolitics of global economic and political systems and processes" [86:223].*

Using feminist perspectives to build AI systems includes critically thinking about when a system should not be built at all, which resonates with data refusal [44, 122], situated refusal [89] and with understanding when not to design [10]. But, even when careful inspection indicates that AI techniques are the proper tools to address a technical problem in a specific environment, central to our feminist approach has been the critical scoping of the 'yeses' (Section 5.2.2). That is, once a team decides to build an AI system for a concrete context, it matters what that system should be capable of doing, which ultimately translates into what people should be capable of doing through the use of the system. However, in AI development, far from being a critical or feminist concern, this should be the standard. We imagine –and are taking steps to build– a future where the script is flipped: from demanding too much from feminist movements (as we see in Section 5.3, and as Roxane Gay reminds us [45]), to demanding more from AI developers, in research and in practice. For example, that they disclose both their own and their projects' positionality, and that they not just move away from the silent claim of 'seeing everything from nowhere' [32, 53], but that they stop posing such view as a synonym of rigour. Similarly, our findings on creating a shared language and learning from each other's disciplines through conversations (Section 5.1) contrast with mainstream narratives that oppose transparency by portraying AI systems as "magic" or "too difficult" [63] or justify a need of developing and deploying even *more 'AI'* to *explain 'AI'*, as in mainstream XAI (a notoriously Global North-centric concept [29]).

Hopefully, our study has shown that it takes considerable, situated work to develop a feminist process of AI development, and that part of it is relational, emotion, and care work, types of work traditionally feminised and undervalued –and as such under-reported in technological production, risking to become invisible [106]. We argue, thus, against ready-made 'solutions' that promise to simply 'add feminism to your AI project' as if it were a patch, an afterthought, or even a target of automation in itself –similar to critiques of using fairness as a 'stamp' in fair-ML research and design [66, 103]. Looking forward, we argue for critical HCI to maintain and deepen its engagement with contemporary matters of power in the creation of technology. For this, we suggest it needs to listen more directly to the experiences of data activists, data labellers and annotators, and small teams of AI developers –not limited to Latin America– to counteract the dominant narratives from big tech companies. Going further, we call for more first-person approaches where their accounts are not filtered through the voices of HCI researchers writing articles *about* these people without them being co-authors, from a 'we' that only includes academics. We acknowledge the tension here, as having a voice in the scholarly conversation also implies putting in more work for which these individuals and groups are not paid. Devising this article together (including study and structure), with the researcher leading the writing of a draft iterated collectively, is what worked for us, but others might find other configurations.

6.2.2 AI development for feminisms. We have approached AI system development as an instrumental (yet anti-solutionist) means for feminisms in their struggles to advance feminist and social justice causes. We find in this specific application of AI techniques, one of multiple tools (not solutions) for the movements and not to, in any way, replace them. Given this orientation, AymurAI aligns with Costanza-Chock's call for "intentionally building liberatory values into technological systems" [25:10] (as seen across our findings but especially in Section 5.2). It also resonates with reflections on assets-based design [120] in that AymurAI builds on the strengths of the organisations involved, and particularly on the existing open justice practices of the partner court. And, in its political intention of auditing power in the judiciary over time, it could also be understood as a type of adversarial design –which DiSalvo frames as transdisciplinary and not limited to the field of design [33]– and as a tool for political contestation [66].

We want to think with others about when and to what extent AI techniques can be used to leverage feminist and social justice causes. Klein and D'Ignazio call us to question *"our perception that work with data and AI can only serve to increase efficiency, automation, and control"* [63:10]. Their call is a provoking invitation to imagine other potential uses of AI techniques. Although we deeply agree with them, our case shows that we do not need to sacrifice efficiency in these other potential uses. Our work has led us to argue that as long as AI technologies (including the conditions for their production) are materially and discursively 'the master's tool', to borrow from Audre Lorde [75], they will never be able to help us 'dismantle the master's house'. But here we must keep asking: What aspects of AI technologies make them a tool of the master? Is it the very real harms caused by specific AI systems produced through the dominant logic? Is it an intrinsic property such as their base in measuring and classifying? Must efficiency always be a master's tool? Or is it only when quantification is taken for granted as the only legitimate way of knowing? Through our work, we dispute the meaning that AI systems can only exist as a master's tool by imagining and creating other ways of developing them that include a critical positioning and a deliberate consideration of a narrow scope of application.

7 Conclusions

Our case shows to the CHI community that it is possible to build AI systems through a feminist approach. It does so by unpacking the feminist work that was required in our specific context –Latin American, anti-technosolutionist, and non-profit. In reflecting upon our experiences with this project, we hope to have demonstrated that the 'feminist' in the so-called 'feminist AI' is in the process. A grounded, collective process that involved alternative, caring ways to face tasks and relationships, transdisciplinary modes of collaboration, and working resourcefully to honour our commitments to key causes. A process that, perhaps unsurprisingly, went well

beyond the technical aspects of building AI systems. In this paper, we do not produce a step-by-step tutorial for an ideal process, nor an explanation of how we went 'from feminist theory to practice' and how the reader can do the same: We offer this project as an existing, functioning, ongoing example of feminist approaches to AI development. We wish that our multi-vocal Latin American perspective inspires transdisciplinary collaboration in projects that take a critical approach to the development of AI systems. In conclusion, we contribute our case as an example of how we might build AI systems otherwise.

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